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'Company Business': A Real-Life Spy Chiller

On Company Business

(not rated)

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"On Company Business" is a grimly factual documentary on how the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) penetrated, manipulated or insinuated its way into foreign governments and the press. The story is an indictment not of the CIA itself but of American presidents who, it is reported, know exactly what the agency is doing and look the other way.

This is the two-year-old film Washingtonians could not see in its entirety before because the Public Broadcasting System is said to have yielded to CIA pressure and did not run the third part when the film was shown in segments on the PBS affiliate WETA in May, 1980. Director Allan Francovich has in his files a letter of apology sent to CIA officials by TV executive Ward Chamberlain. Francovich believes it's obvious that WETA feared a government funding cutback in retaliation for showing the film in its full-length three-hour format.

As a film, "On Company Business" suffers from some of the dramatic pitfalls inherent in making a documentary. The first part, during which former agents speak candidly about the agency and old newsreel clips are shown, serves as background for parts one and two, which are far more dramatic and chilling. The first part tends to move slowly, while Francovich efficiently and thoroughly presents the rationale for the agency's founding in 1947 and gives historical figures' views of its importance in the cold war years.

But the film picks up in part two, during which former CIA operatives, former New York Times newsmen A.J. Langguth and CIA victims talk about interrogation and torture sanctioned and practiced in other countries by CIA agents. Langguth recounts how wires that deliver high-voltage shocks were placed in torture victims' mouths and on their genitals.

The most chilling aspect of "On Company Business" is the fact that former CIA officials who have not turned against the agency dig their own graves on camera. Suave, slippery David Atlee Phillips allows as how CIA agents would be the last people you'd want to spend time on a desert island with, but after all someone has to do this devious dirty work. Former CIA head (1973-75) William

Colby comes off as a jut-jawed, mechanistic robot devoid of empathy or remorse.

It is a matter of record that the CIA infiltrated Cuba, planned an assassination attempt on Fidel Castro, tried hard to keep the late Salvador Allende from becoming top man in Chile, wanted the Belgium Congo's Lumumba destroyed and mounted a terrorist initiative in Angola with paid mercenaries. Less well known is the extent to which the CIA has co-opted trade unions around the world, a fact made blatantly obvious in Francovich's film.

The American Institute for Free Labor Development in Front Royal, Va. is nothing more than a front for training labor organizers who are used by the CIA to kill off foreign labor movements and depose legitimately elected leaders, Francovich contends.

In essence, this film is a brutal indictment of a U.S. system that sanctions presidents who not only condone torture, oppression and the suffering of innocent people, but order such treatment in high-level staterooms through "non-directives" they never write down and would deny vehemently if caught. In a real sense, CIA operatives are plumbers going about far more destructive in-

ternational dirty tricks than the Watergate dirty tricks that lost Richard Nixon the presidency, the documentary reports. For example, former CIA agent Richard Martinez was told to keep no books and frequently traveled with briefcases full of money.

Philip Agee, the former CIA operative whose expose on the CIA ("Inside the Company") forced him to leave the United States and got him deported from England, served as a consultant on this film and is one of the principals in it. Yet this is not a sour grapes story told by a former employee; it is a comprehensive agency self-indictment. This is the agency that hired the likes of David Bufkin, a mercenary in Angola who much preferred dirty tricks to carrying a lunch pail and working from 9 to 5 with a 10-minute coffee break in between. "It just isn't my style," he said of the lunch-pail life.

It would have been easier for Allan Francovich to do a fictional movie on the CIA, but it would have been more expensive (this film cost about \$300,000) and undoubtedly would not have been such a strong indictment.

"On Company Business" is playing at the West End Circle Theater at 22nd & L streets, NW. If it were formally rated, it would be an R, due to the strong language and film clips of mutilated bodies.